

REMARKS

Claims 1-10, 23-29, 53, 54 and 56-58 are pending. By this Amendment, claims 1, 2, 6, 23 and 56-58 are amended to even more clearly distinguish over the applied references. No new matter is added by the above amendments.

I. Consideration of References

Applicant filed an Information Disclosure Statement on October 14, 2004. The Examiner is requested to consider the references identified in the October 14 Information Disclosure Statement, and to return an initialed and signed copy of the PTO-1449 that accompanied that Information Disclosure Statement with the next Patent Office communication.

II. All Pending Claims are Patentable

Applicant notes with appreciation the identification of allowable subject matter in claims 26-28. Applicant respectfully submits that all pending claims are in condition for allowance as detailed below.

Claims 1-10, 23-29, 53, 54 and 56-58 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph. The Office Action asserts that "little gas release" in independent claims 1, 6, 23 and 56-58 renders the claims indefinite because it is a relative term that is not defined in the specification or claims. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

MPEP 2173.05(b) states that the proper procedure for determining whether claim language including a term of degree is definite is to first determine "whether the specification provides some standard for measuring that degree" and second, even if no standard is provided in the specification, to determine "whether one of ordinary skill in the art, in view of the prior art and the status of the art, would be nevertheless reasonably apprised of the scope of the invention." The term "little gas release" would be clear to one having ordinary skill in the art in view of the specification and in view of the status of the art.

In particular, the present specification: (1) explains throughout that it is important to prevent ambient atmosphere (air, water vapor, etc.) from entering the exposure light optical path for shorter wavelength exposure light and provides specific examples of acceptable concentration levels (see, for example, page 33, lines 9-14); (2) indicates that the inner wall of the member forming the chambers where a purge gas is supplied should be formed from or coated by a material involving little gas release to achieve the acceptable concentration levels (see, for example, page 65, line 24 - page 66, line 8); and (3) identifies at least one example of a coating that can achieve this effect (see, for example, page 68, lines 14-22). Thus, the specification provides a standard for measuring the meaning of "little gas release."

In addition, one of ordinary skill in the art would know of a number of materials and treatments (such as the one cited in the specification) that result in a member that inhibits the release of gas. Thus, one of ordinary skill in the art would be reasonably apprised of the scope of "little gas release" in view of what is known in the art. That is, one having ordinary skill in the art would know which materials would result in a member having little gas release, as well as which materials do not provide this effect.

Withdrawal of the rejection is requested.

Claim 2 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph and under 35 U.S.C. §101 on the grounds that it recites both a method and apparatus. Applicant submits that these rejections have been overcome by the above amendment to claim 2. Withdrawal of the rejections is requested.

Claims 1-10, 23-25, 29, 53, 54 and 56-58 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over JP-A-7-240366 to Masaaki et al. in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,825,470 to Miyai et al. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Independent claim 1 recites that the following procedures are performed in the same airtight stage chamber: (1) detecting, before the second object is installed on the movable

stage, a position of the second object with respect to the movable stage by using a detecting system provided in the airtight stage chamber; (2) adjusting the position of the second object with respect to the movable stage in the airtight stage chamber based on a result of the detection; and (3) installing, on the movable stage, the second object which has been adjusted. Independent claim 56 recites similar steps with respect to a "substrate" rather than a "second object." Neither Masaaki et al. nor Miyai et al. discloses or suggests this combination of features including detecting the position of the second object (or substrate) before the second object (or substrate) is installed on the movable stage and then adjusting the position of the second object (or substrate), wherein the movable stage and the detecting system are provided in the same airtight stage chamber.

Masaaki et al. discloses bringing a wafer into chamber 33 by grasping the wafer with arm 47, detecting a contour of the wafer and aligning the wafer flat using sensing table 50, and then transporting the wafer to the wafer stage in chamber 32 with slider 49a. Thus, Masaaki et al. performs the detecting in a chamber that is different from the chamber in which the movable stage is located. Miyai et al. does not overcome this deficiency in Masaaki et al. Accordingly, independent claims 1 and 56, along with their dependent claims, are patentable over Masaaki et al. and Miyai et al.

Independent claim 6 recites the feature of "transporting the second object, of which position has been adjusted in the airtight chamber, to the movable stage through a space in which air-tightness is maintained." Independent claim 57 recites a similar feature with respect to a "substrate" rather than a "second object." Independent claim 23 similarly recites that the transport system transports the second object to the movable stage through a space in which air-tightness is maintained, and independent claim 58 recites a similar feature regarding transporting a "substrate" instead of a "second object." Neither Masaaki et al. nor Miyai et al. discloses the feature of transporting a second object (or substrate) whose position

has been adjusted to a movable stage through a space in which air-tightness is maintained. Accordingly, independent claims 6, 23, 57 and 58, along with their dependent claims, are patentable over Masaaki et al. and Miyai et al.

Withdrawal of the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) is requested.

III. Conclusion

In view of the foregoing, Applicant respectfully submits that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact Applicant's undersigned attorney at the telephone number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,



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MAC/ccs

Attachment:

Petition for Extension of Time

Date: October 17, 2005

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